DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 462 133 PS 023 313

AUTHOR	Ensminger, Karen, Ed.; Hockey, Amy, Ed.; Mangigian, Lisa Ed.; Warren, Mitzi, Ed.; Eisenlord, Terri, Ed.
TITLE	Offspring: The Magazine of the Michigan Council of Cooperative Nursery Schools, 1994.
INSTITUTION	Illinois Professional Development Partnership Center, Bloomington.
ISSN	ISSN-0472-6340
PUB DATE	1994-00-00
NOTE	74p.; Published twice yearly.
AVAILABLE FROM	MCCN/Offspring, 8085 Hurron River Dr., Dexter, MI 48130 (1-year, $6; 2-years, $10).
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT	Offspring; v36 n1-2 1994
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Attention Deficit Disorders; *Caregiver Child Relationship; Child Development; Child Rearing; Clothing; *Cooperation; *Day Care; Early Childhood Education; Grief; Listening Skills; *Nursery Schools; *Parent Child Relationship; Parent School Relationship; Periodicals; Preschool Children; Reading Attitudes; School Readiness; Verbal Abuse
IDENTIFIERS	*Cooperative Preschools; Fire Safety Education; Firesetters; Independent Behavior

ABSTRACT

"Offspring" is a magazine for parents, teachers, and others, intended to provide a forum for views on dealing with young children, to express a variety of ideas, to promote the co-op philosophy, and to enhance the relationship of members of these groups with children and with each other. This document contains issues 1 and 2 from 1994. The first issue presents six articles on the following topics: (1) understanding one's place in the family (an interview with Sister Karen Hawver); (2) promoting independence in preschool children; (3) helping children go to school for the first time; (4) helping children deal with death; (5) raising children to be readers; and (6) observing a young girl's changing flair for fashion. The second issue presents five articles on the following topics: (1) working in co-operative nurseries; (2) dealing with children with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD); (3) teaching children to listen the first time; (4) learning from counseling by a firefighter; and (5) learning about the effects of verbal abuse on children. (AP)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made

ED 462 133

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

T. Rayer

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Offspring

The Magazine of the Michigan Council of Cooperative Nursery Schools, 1994

Karen Ensminger, Amy Hockey, Lisa Mangigian,
Mitzi Warren, and Terri Eisenlord, Editors

Volume 36, Numbers 1-2

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PS 025 515

SPRING

1994: No. 1

...tion of the Michigan Council
...operative Nursery Schools

PS 023313

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Offspring Magazine is published twice yearly. Articles reflect opinions of the authors and not necessarily the editorial board and staff. Manuscripts are accepted for consideration. Subscription to this magazine is through membership in the Michigan Council of Cooperative Nursery Schools or through individual subscriptions. For subscription information, see inside back cover. MCCN does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin.

EDITORIAL BOARD

John Bernardo, M.A., *Detroit Public Schools Psychologist and Psychotherapist*
Carole Grates, *Child Day Care Licensing Consultant*
Anne Cairns Federlein, Ph.D., *Dean of Behavioral and Applied Sciences, State University of New York at Oneota*
Sally L. Fee, M.A., *Birmingham Public Schools, Kindergarten Teacher*
Joseph Fischhoff, M.D., *Child Psychiatrist*
Dan Hodgins, M.A., *Early Childhood Coordinator, Mott Community College*
Donna Howe, M.A., *Michigan State University*
Marjorie M. Kunz, M.A., *MCCN Advisor*
Ginny McCaig, M.A., *University of Michigan-Dearborn*
Marilynn Rosenthal, Ph.D., *Founding Editor*
Jacquelyn Thompson, M.A., *Early Childhood Consultant Michigan Department of Education*
Kathy Brown, *President, MCCN*

EDITORIAL STAFF

Karen Ensminger
Amy Hockey
Lisa Mangigian
Mitzi Warren

Offspring is written for parents, teachers and others:

- ☐ **To provide a forum for views on dealing with young children;**
- ☐ **To express a variety of ideas;**
- ☐ **To promote the co-op philosophy;**
- ☐ **To enhance our relationships with children and each other.**

Michigan Council of Cooperative Nursery Schools is a member of Parent Cooperative Preschools International.

Copyright © 1994 by the Michigan Council of Cooperative Nursery Schools. All rights reserved. Published in Ann Arbor, Michigan, United States of America.

ISSN: 0472-6340

OFFSPRING

THE MAGAZINE OF THE MICHIGAN
COUNCIL OF COOPERATIVE NURSERY SCHOOLS

Vol. XXXVI No. 1

Place in the Family:
An Interview with
Sister Karen Hawver — 2 — Lisa Mangigian

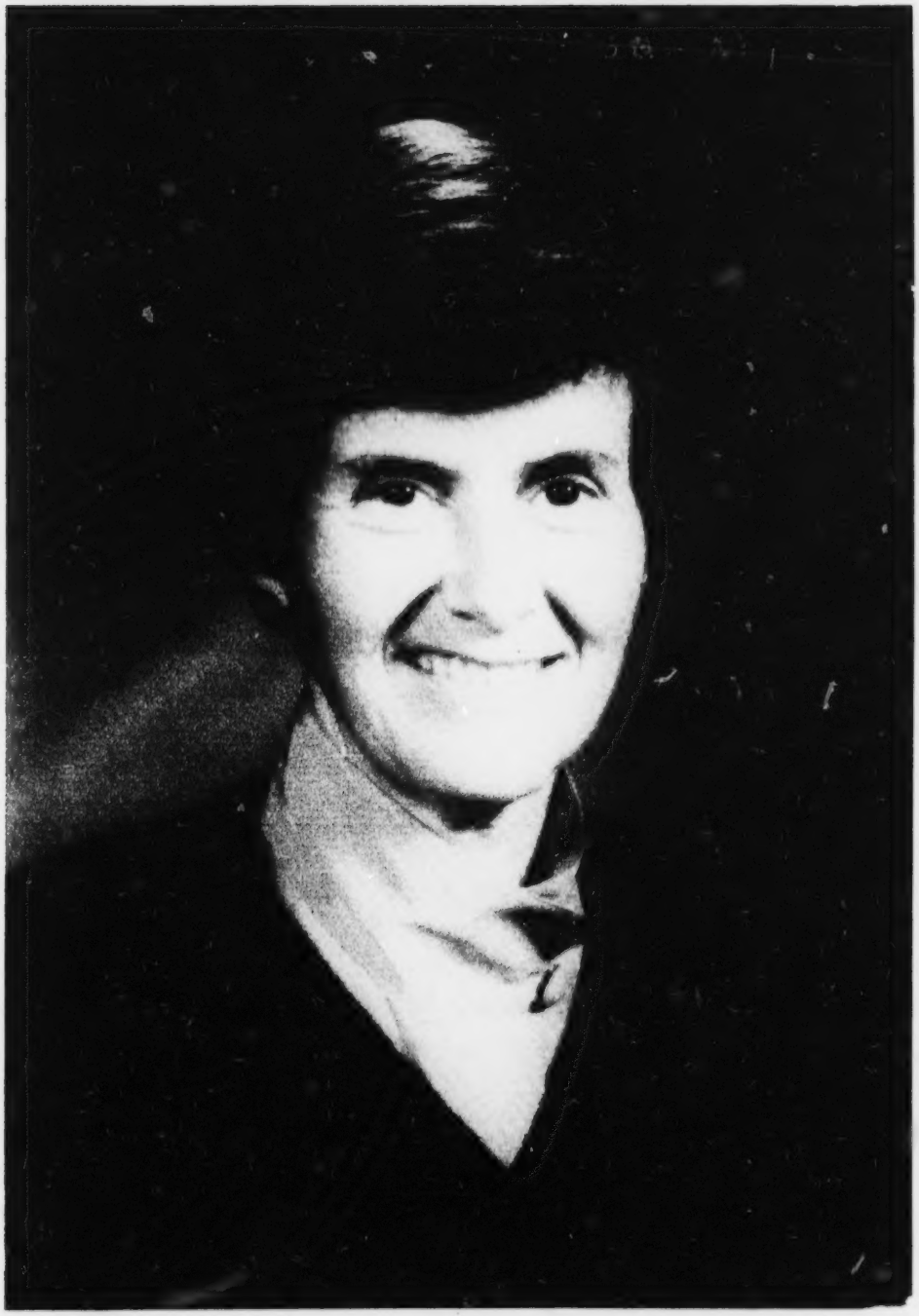
I'll Do It MYSELF!
Promoting Independence In
Preschool Children — 7 — Anne Soderman

Saddened By Death — 13 — Jerre Cory

Going to School — 19 — Emily Miller

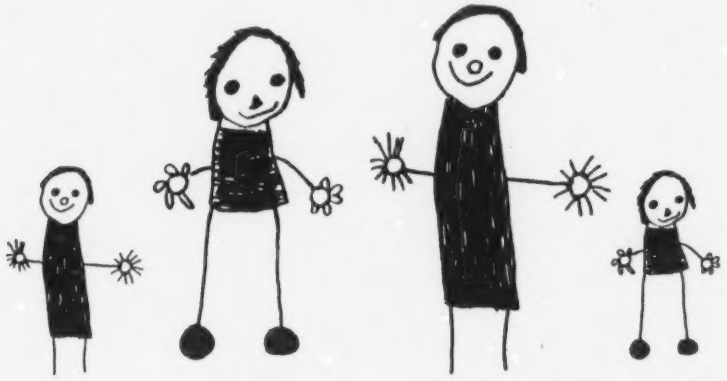
Raising a Reader:
An Interview with
Karen Paciorek — 22 — Debra Fitzgerald

A Flair For Fashion — 28 — Sue Mikan



Place in the Family

An Interview with Sister Karen Hawver



LISA MANGIGIAN

Sister Karen Hawver, S.C., Principal of Holy Family Elementary School in Rochester, Michigan, will be the keynote speaker at the MCCN Conference in April. Her area of expertise is place in the family.

Sister Karen received her B.S. in Education at Mount St. Joseph College and her M.A. in Education specializing in Elementary School Counseling from DePaul University. She has had 14 years experience as an elementary school counselor. For the past 15 years, Sister Karen has also been teaching adults a series entitled, *Understanding yourself and your child.*

Lisa Mangigian is an editor for Offspring, *a co-op parent, and has just given birth to her third child!*

Offspring: Sister Karen, when you speak of place in the family are you referring to birth order?

Sr. Karen: Yes.

Offspring: What sparked your interest in this area?

Sr. Karen: I did my master's thesis on Counseling of Children. Since 1975 as I have worked with families and children I have noticed certain behaviors, and I began to conclude that they were typical. Throughout the years I have been collecting articles and done more research. I find this topic fascinating.

Offspring: Could you please briefly explain the concept of birth order?

Sr. Karen: A child's place in the family is the basis for his or her security. A child's perception often differs from that of the parents. Problems occur when there is this clash in perceptions. For instance, a younger child may be convinced that he will never measure up to the eldest child. His behavior then will reflect this perception, and unfortunately his feelings and difficulties may continue on to adulthood.

Offspring: How does a child's unique personality figure into the place in the family theory?

Sr. Karen: Parenting and environment make the difference. For example, even a mild-mannered introverted first child will have the typical characteristics of being independent and intelligent even though these qualities may be expressed much differently from the way a more outgoing child would behave.

Offspring: Would you please comment on the second child.

Sr. Karen: Second children learn to be different from the first child. If the first child is shy or reserved the second child will usually be outgoing. Often the second child perceives that his parents want him to be just like his older sibling. This results in much anger with the child's attitude being, "I'll be testing you to see if you'll withdraw your love."

Offspring: Where does the third child fit into the family scenario?

Sr. Karen: The third child is the best adjusted, happiest, and most sincere. The third child in a family is very adaptable and usually has good relationships with her older siblings whom often don't like each other. The third child has the

ability to see the good in situations and people. Unfortunately, the third child feels that her opinion doesn't count, but all in all I would still say that the third child occupies the perfect place in the family.

Offspring: Is there a perfect number of children for a family?

Sr. Karen: NO!

Offspring: Do you notice more sibling rivalry when there are two children vying for parental attention, or is competition just as strong in large families?

Sr. Karen: It is strongest in families with two children, especially when they are the same sex.

Offspring: What are some characteristics of children from large families?

Sr. Karen: These children are happy with small things. Their best friends are usually members of their own family. Often the youngest children have a special relationship with one of their older siblings. In general, they are very adaptable. Usually, there is one child the parents worry about the most.

Offspring: How has your study of place in the family been incorporated into your work as a principal?

Sr. Karen: I find that parents are usually eager for advice and encouragement in raising their children. Children often draw conclusions that parents do not intend to give them. Sometimes I can help parents deal with their children's perceptions and guide the families towards resolutions of conflicts.

Offspring: Whose body of research have you found to be the most helpful in the field of birth order?

Sr. Karen: Alfred Adler is my all-time favorite. He is a psychotherapist who dealt with depressed patients. He found that the problems that people came to him with were only superficial. Most often the root causes of their depression had to do with perceptions received in their childhoods relating to their place in the family.

Offspring: What advice would you give to someone who came to you for counseling relating to place in the family problems?

Sr. Karen: Don't carry the heavy burdens of your childhood. I would point out the present reality: what good is it now

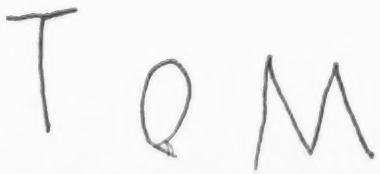
to continue having negative feelings or participating in self-defeating behavior? Children do not have to be slotted in certain places, and they can change as they mature into adulthood. I would point out that most parents do the best job they can. Sometimes adult children need to forgive their parents and then go on with their lives.

I'll Do It MYSELF: *Promoting Independence In Preschool Children*

ANNE K. SODERMAN

Tom, who had just completed a picture at the easel, eyed his personalized mixture of form, color, and line with satisfaction. His teacher, noticing that he had apparently finished, commented, "That's really nice, Tommy. I'll put your name on it."

"No!" Tommy said quickly. "I'll do it," and he flattened his hand protectively in the upper left-hand corner as if to shield it from the familiar black marker. With his other hand, he pumped the brush up and down in the red paint, and applying it to his picture, he painstakingly printed:



Anne K. Soderman, Ph.D., is Professor in Family and Child Ecology at Michigan State University. *This article first appeared in* Offspring *1982: No. 2.*

When he had finished, his teacher quickly and neatly penned "TOM" underneath his dripping letters, unclipped the picture from the easel, and hung the paper to dry. Tommy frowned. "Do you want to paint another one?" she offered brightly. Tommy did not. His teacher, who was otherwise fairly perceptive, later noted in a conference with Tommy's parents that he seemed to have lost his earlier enthusiasm for painting at the easel. "I guess he just tired of it. That happens."

What had happened was that Tommy had been unwittingly turned off by an overly-helpful, efficient adult who had failed to recognize a chld-sized request for independence. "I can do this all by myself" is what he had wanted to express. His teacher had not been sensitive to the message.

Knowing when *not* to help in a classroom situation or at home is certainly a critical skill for teachers and parents in their interaction with young children. If, indeed, one of our finest goals for our children is self-confidence and capable, independent behavior . . . that maturity will require allowing children the right to clumsy effort, messy mistakes, and slow, sometimes aggravating practice at problem solving.

Too often, we are ambiguous where our children's independence is concerned. To be helpful is to be loving. To be protective is to be concerned. Certainly, there is merit in being helpful and protective, for our children's very survival and trust in the world around them depends upon that initial security. Conversely, a "Johnny-on-the-spot" parent or teacher may not be as efficient as she would appear. Author K.H. Read suggests that "too many times the child has to climb down from the adult's lap when he might have started in a more advantageous position in the first place on his trip to independence." She notes that the drive to be independent that is experienced by all healthy children may conflict with an adult's own need to help or to feel needed.

> *This need is especially strong when we feel least sure that we can help. By helping, by doing things for a child, we try to prove to ourselves that we are, in fact competent and able. The child's dependency reassures us that we have a place in the school.*

> *Watch what happens in the coatroom. The inexperienced teacher is the one who steps in and expertly buttons the button that the child has been fumbling with intently. She takes the child's coat from its low hook and holds it for him and then may be surprised when he runs away instead of putting it on. She puts in the plug when he is ready to wash his hands, pushes up his sleeves and hands him the soap. She deprives him of many chances to do things that he can do for himself.*

Adults do not consciously undermine a child's independence and are often baffled by a child's fury when interrupted in the effort to move forward in increased competence or independence. A well-meaning mother in a local cooperative nursery recently experienced such behavior in a child who had accidentally spilled a large tray of bristle blocks. The assisting mother stood back, watching the child's obvious dedication in completing the task. When there were only two or three blocks remaining on the floor, the adult moved forward and, with every good intention, complimented the child with a smile and

the comment, "You *really* worked hard to pick up all those blocks . . . and without even being asked!" As she spoke, the mother reached down, picked up the few blocks still on the floor, and threw them onto the tray. The child watched the blocks fall onto the heap she had worked so diligently to restore and then looked up at the helping adult. With a shriek, the child shoved the tray toward the edge of the table. The mother reacted quickly, restraining the child from dumping the tray and its contents. What ensued was a stormy and tearful tantrum on the part of the child and total confusion and disbelief on the part of the adult.

At the end of the morning session, when all of the participating adults were talking about the morning's events, the mother recounted her frustration and inability to understand why the child could become so upset over such a small incident. Another adult suggested that, although it was difficult to always know "what was going on in a small child's head," perhaps it had been important to the child to complete the entire task independently. The child's hard work actually may have been negated by the well-intentioned act. The last few blocks apparently were perceived by the child as the prize to be won for all her hard work.

The move toward increasing competence and autonomous behavior is a gradual process that evolves out of children's everyday life experiences with others around them. P. Chance suggests that it begins in infancy when young children feel others are responsive to their behavior. They cry and someone comes, calming their hunger or making them dry and comfortable again. They smile; someone smiles back. Thus, children learn they can make something happen in their world . . . or that they are powerless to control events around them.

Autonomy and competence are characteristics that are not necessarily correlated with intelligence in children. The child who develops the sense that actions bring results is motivated to attempt new challenges. The child who has had few successes or who is made to feel inferior, stupid, or helpless, seldom reaches his potential. These children often become defensive, anxious, and even depressed, seldom involving themselves in competitive situations. It can become very painful to fail when there is a minimum of support from those

around them. These children learn that it may be safer to hide out behind inactivity and dependence on others. In the long run, this kind of coping strategy will prove to be very costly to the developing child.

Since infancy and early childhood appear to be especially critical stages in the development of competence and autonomy, the following suggestions may be helpful to caregivers and parents interested in actively enhancing these important characteristics in young children:

Young children's inexperience with their world and their immature thought structures place them constantly in positions of potentially less-than-perfect performance. Adults who are quick to criticize, insensitive to intent on the part of the child, only concerned with the consequences of the act, and punitive in their treatment of behavior create a climate of insecurity and fear for the developing child. Whenever this happens, the chance for growth is severely limited. Adults need to be supportive, firm, and consistent in their total management of the child so that a secure base is established from which the child may venture.

Allow choices whenever possible. Daily living exercises, such as deciding what to wear or choosing between tomato or chicken noodle soup, may provide excellent decision-making opportunities for young children. Any of the alternatives offered to a child must be acceptable. If not, it is clearly not the time for choice-giving. Too often, adults only *play* at giving children choices and, when the child fails to select the adult's real preference, the child is then manipulated or badgered into the other alternative. Eventually, the child becomes aware that his decision is acceptable only when it is the one the adult approves of in the first place. The result is that the child fails to develop confidence in his own decision-making ability and effectiveness; instead, there may be the growth of adult-dependent behavior or resentment of authority.

Consider the readiness level of the child. Adults who are inexperienced with children can alleviate some of the confusion about what to expect of children at any particular age by becoming better acquainted with some of the general information available. We can then more easily take into consideration the age and maturity of the child when viewing

his "finished product" or his behavior; moreover, the child's own skill levels, rather than the achievement of his peers or siblings, should be used as the yardstick to evaluate his progress.

Understand that regression or increased dependence will occur periodically. There may be periods where children vascillate noticeably between their desire for separation and a desire for dependence or closeness with a significant other. Children may ask for help in doing something we know they can do themselves just for reassurance that we are still there if needed. Other times, they simply like the company of an adult to reassure them as they work through familiar or unfamiliar tasks. Adults should be alert for verbal and nonverbal requests for help and provide enough to relieve frustration or stimulate reinterest without unduly reinforcing the dependent behavior. This would be a good time to point out to children any recent successes and achievements as signs that they are "really growing."

Promote the growth of new skills. Helping the child to find new ways to move away from dependency without undermining the child's security and trust begins with the adult understanding that children like to solve problems that are related to previous successful problem-solving. This kind of success builds self-confidence. Again, this calls for sensitivity on the part of helping adults for signs of frustration in children who are temporarily stymied in their problem solving. We may need to suggest possible alternative methods or aid the child in hunting for new resources if they are available and useful.

Finally, the watchword in the development of independence must be patience, for it is often easier to do the job ourselves. Little fingers and maturing minds are not often as nimble as our busy lives would seem to permit. Yet, the results of thoughtful effort and encouragement towards autonomous behavior are eventually wonderfully rewarding for parents, teachers, and children. Bradley, age nine, put it best when he wrote:

If you touch me soft and gentle
If you look at me and smile
If you listen to me sometimes before you speak . . .
I will grow, really grow.

Saddened by Death

JERRE CORY

This article originated as a workshop during the annual MCCN Spring Conference in May 1993. This is a summary of Cory's main points made by the editors from her presentation outline.

Helping a Grieving Child

Responding to the needs of a grieving child means "being there." Each person must let go of his or her own expectations and try to understand those of the child. Listening is more

Jerre Cory, M.A., is the Executive Director of Ele's Place, a center for children who are grieving to embrace their loss effectively. Jerre has worked in various capacities with children in the Lansing community for 23 years as a high school and middle school teacher and as an elementary school counselor.

important than guiding and advising. Stick with the facts and answer questions grieving children have as directly, simply, and honestly as possible. Use the deceased person's name, or title (i.e., father, grandma) when referring to him or her. Also, answer only what the question is asking. If something is not clear, let the child know that too. If your explanation goes beyond the question, you may confuse the child and introduce more information than necessary.

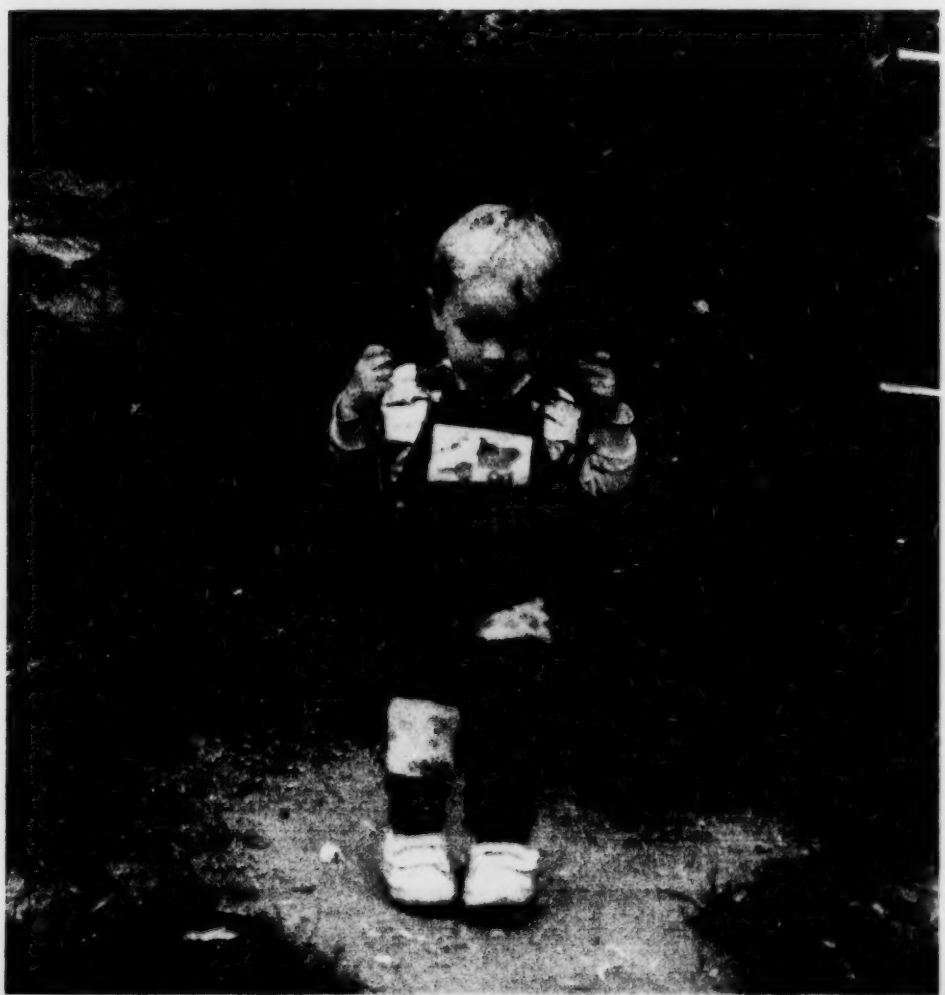
When talking with the child or a group of children, use a normal voice and use the words *dead, dying,* and *death.* Avoid using phrases that are meant to lesson the impact of death such as "went away" or "God took him." These can be scary and confusing. Straightforward and simple language such as "I am concerned and would like to help you." "I'm sad about your grandfather's death too." "I don't know what to say," means something to children and may comfort them. Don't say "I know just how you feel." It is possible to relate to a child's feelings and situation, but don't take over those feelings. Offer warmth, affection and the assurance of your physical presence.

Listening means letting the child lead in discussing what he or she feels is important. When listening, be sensitive to the child's age level of understanding. Children may lack the words to express their thoughts and feelings. By listening carefully, it is possible to relate to some of the child's feelings. This will help the child to look at and identify feelings and understand them better. Answer only the questions, not a child's statements or expressions of feelings. Try to be encouraging as the child begins to express fears and fantasies. Always reassure children that the death is not their fault, that death is not contagious, and not all their loved ones will soon die.

Listening to a depressed child is particularly hard. But it is not true that listening to and reflecting back on depressed feelings will encourage more depression. By listening and accepting these depressed feelings, you can help a child move on from the depression more quickly. Importantly, be patient, and accept the emotions and reactions the child expresses. Do not tell the child how he or she should feel, and do not push empty reassurances on the child. They are still children and may bring up the subject again and again as they try to accept and learn to live with what has happened.

Parents and educators need to be aware of the resurfacing of grieving feelings around holiday times, anniversaries or the deceased's birthday or date of death. Frequently these special dates are more painful the second year after the death. Sometimes grief is even delayed until years after the loss; at this time, grief may overwhelm the child and feelings will leak out. It may then show up as inappropriate behavior. If years have passed, the root of the problem is frequently overlooked or ignored. Children who grow up with their grief may need to reprocess the death as they reach each developmental stage.

As cooperative parents working in the classroom, some will undoubtedly have the chance to act as the "teacher" when relating with children about death. These situations are different than simply talking to a child about death. Teachers and parents need to realize that the grieving child is often not well rested due to insomnia, sleep interruptions or dreams. No matter how well intentioned, adults must not impose their own religious beliefs on students when answering questions. There are too many variations in religious viewpoint; sharing these in a school setting could cause deep confusion and fear. If a



child expresses his or her religious ideas about death, it's important for the adult to respect them.

Returning to school after being gone due to the death of a person close to a child is a very important step for him or her. It signals the return to more normal living. Try to represent order, security and stability in the child's life. There certainly will be many changes taking place at home. A teacher's or parent's body language gives a returning bereaved student messages too. Poor eye contact, stiff bearing, a distant nod, or a facade of cheerfulness is a message to the student that "You are different, unacceptable and alone." Assisting parents and teachers can communicate on the first day returning by using words such as, "I missed you. I wondered how you were doing." Follow natural instincts when talking, keeping in mind being direct, honest, sincere and accepting of the child and his or her feelings.

Helping a Classroom Deal with a Death

If a person known to the whole class dies, the day the death is announced within a class is a particularly difficult time, of course. Teachers need to allow time for children to express their feelings and ask questions. Teachers will be watched for role modeling to help students become comfortable with their sad feelings. Perhaps some activity pertaining to the death could be substituted for regular class work such as drawing pictures, discussions, or planning for a dedication to the life of the deceased or having students talk about a favorite memory of the deceased to be made into a book. Do not act as if nothing has happened and wait for the students to initiate conversation. To stimulate communication with a class, ask what they miss most about the person. What time of day do friends feel the loss most keenly? During what activities do other students miss the person?

What hurts and helps grieving children is best illustrated in their own words. The following quotations are from *When Children Speak of Grief,* 1983, B.H. Conley, Thum Printing, Elburn, IL 60119):

"It's how everybody feels and acts that makes me cry. I know a girl whose mother died. Now the other kids won't even play with her – like they're afraid it's gonna happen to their mother, too."

"It gets me mad when teachers treat us different from other kids. They won't talk about death and dying when we are around. They're afraid they'll hurt us, and they don't know that treating us so different hurts us more than anything else."

"The friendly teachers are O.K. They don't make a fuss. They tell us they feel bad for us and they go ahead and treat us like everyone else. And that makes us feel like we belong there – instead of wondering if we've got some kind of disease that other people think they'll catch."

"I liked it when my class came to the funeral home. The flowers they sent made me feel good, too . . . I know that coming was hard for them because it made them think about how they would feel if their mother died. But, they just acted natural and didn't try to make me feel good. They just wanted me to know they cared. I liked that."

"I want to talk about it. I want to get it out. I don't want to keep it all bottled up inside."

"I don't want pity – but I don't want people to act like he never lived either . . . I just want to be myself . . . whatever that is."

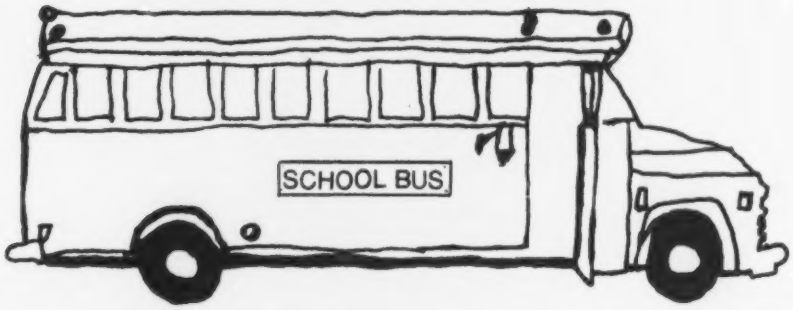
If a student dies, the teacher should maintain contact with the family and encourage the class to reach out to the family; send them a note or visit them at home. Showing concern and paying attention to surviving siblings and parents is helpful to them. Teachers and students can also attend the funeral. Papers on display by a deceased student should not be taken down immediately. When taken down, they can be returned in person (or by mail) to the family. Co-op members close to the family can be comforting and show support during this time of need.

It is a good idea for teams of teachers and possibly parents in the co-op to get together prior to the return of a grieving student to share feelings and questions they may have. This process should be repeated several weeks after the child has returned to school in order to share concerns or observations. Parents and teachers can share thoughts, concerns and questions with colleagues. Another's experience with illness or death may be of help to you.

Wrap Up

Teachers should realize that aggressiveness, lack of interest in school, stuttering, restlessness, tearfulness, and indifference, are common signs of a child having difficulty dealing with a significant loss. It would be appropriate to make a referral for counseling and/or meet with the child's parent (or guardian) if these symptoms are displayed over a prolonged period of time. Such behavior will leave little energy for normal growth and development and intervention may be desirable.

Most of all, know your own personal limitations. Be open and allow personal unresolved feelings about death to surface. Don't hide feelings. The struggle which is experienced may be the greatest demonstration of caring. We all have some level of difficulty listening to someone who is depressed. One need not listen endlessly or actively at all times. Indicate personal limitations and allow for future availability. If limits are expressed openly, the grieving student will not feel abandoned. Finally, when dealing with a grieving child, don't be afraid of making mistakes. A child will not be destroyed by an error in judgment.



Going to School

EMILY MILLER

Whether your youngster will be starting kindergarten or elementary school this fall, or returning to familiar surroundings, going to school is bound to stimulate a wide range of feelings. As the talk turns to September and the end of summer, children frequently feel both excited and concerned. The family can play a vital role in helping to make the transition to school a positive and exciting one.

Emily Miller, M.S.W., A.C.S.W., has a private psychotherapy practice in Ann Arbor, MI, specializing in the treatment of children and families.

Preparation is a key factor. If your child is starting school for the first time, walk with her to the building during vacation and show her the room, playground, route home and other points of interest. Explore whether she knows any of her classmates. If possible, introduce her to or tell her about her teacher. Prepare her, in a general way, for the activities to expect and demonstrate an upbeat attitude about the new things she will be learning and the wonderful experience she can have. For example, telling her, "You'll get to draw, read, and sing" can emphasize those pursuits that are most familiar and pleasurable to her.

Separation reactions are normal for both child and parent, particularly in the first few weeks. Your child may be more clingy or express worries about various situations that might come up ("How will I find the bus?" "Where will Johnny wait for me?" "What if I have to go to the bathroom?") Respond in a matter-of-fact way so that your child is aware of the plan, and emphasize the teacher as a supportive, helpful adult. Be aware of your own feelings as your child leaves for school and try not to unknowingly communicate your own anxiety. Do not overreact if your child shows some expected temporary backsliding in other areas of behavior (i.e., sleeping, crankiness, toileting, etc.) as he rallies to master this very important step. Be supportive, express confidence in his abilities and reassure him that "School can take a while to get used to," but it will keep getting better. Praise his new skills and encourage communication about his specific experiences.

Maintain open communication between your family and the school. If there is a significant family crisis occurring (e.g., death, divorce, illness, move), inform school personnel so that they can be supportive to your child.

In the event that you observe a significant change in behavior or complaints about school that persist past several

weeks, explore the situation by talking with your child and his teacher to determine whether some intervention is needed.

School has the potential to expand your child's horizons, reinforce her independence and introduce her to relationships with friends, teachers and the community at large. Helping her to make a positive beginning can help assure a successful year and boost your child's confidence in mastering challenges.

Raising a Reader

An Interview with Karen Paciorek

DEBRA FITZGERALD

Raising children to be good readers is something most parents worry a great deal about, but early childhood specialist Karen Menke Paciorek says not to worry – learning to read is as natural as learning to walk and talk.

"I know it's something parents worry about, but if you put learning to read on the same par as learning to walk and learning to talk, you realize that we don't get frantic about our children learning to walk," said Paciorek, Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education at Eastern Michigan University and President-elect of the Michigan Association for the Education of Young Children.

Debra Fitzgerald is the editor of Focus EMU, *a staff and faculty newsletter published by Eastern Michigan University Office of Public Information, from which this interview is reprinted with permission.*

"We assume that our children will learn to walk and talk, and they do," she said. "But when it comes to reading, we don't know what to do and we wonder if we should go out and buy one of those fancy kits like 'Hooked on Phonics.' "

Special efforts like that aren't necessary, she says, if parents use the same techniques for encouraging reading that they use for encouraging walking and talking. "You read to them, you take them places, you write notes and say, 'Mom's writing a note and I'm leaving it on the counter for Daddy so he'll know where we are.' You can have them add some little squiggles to the note and pretty soon they'll be coming home and asking Daddy, 'Did you get our note?' "

Perhaps most important is for children to grow up in homes where they see their parents read and have books read to them everyday. "They begin to realize that reading gives them information," Paciorek said. "You can tell your child, 'It's going to be cold today,' and they'll ask, 'How do you know?' and you can tell them, 'I read it in the newspaper. See, right here it says it's going to be cold.' They begin to understand the importance of reading."

Simple excursions to the grocery store with toddlers can emphasize the importance of reading. "Ask them, 'Do you want the cherry Popsicles or the grape ones?' And then show them that the word on the box tells what kind it is," Paciorek said. "Things like that will teach them how important it is to be able to read."

In choosing books for children, it's important to choose ones the children will find "fun," she added. "There are so many wonderful books out there now. The illustrations are priceless compared to what we had a generation ago. When children have been read good books, they learn to like books."

Like others, Paciorek thinks most children probably watch too much television, and adds that the most popular children's television shows are doing a disappointing job of promoting reading. "One of my complaints about 'Barney' is that Barney doesn't read books to children," she said. "Captain Kangaroo used to read books, occasionally Mr. Rogers will read a book, but 'Sesame Street' doesn't read. Children need to have books read to them every day."

Children's television shows could invite children's book authors on to read their books, Paciorek added, which the

young viewers would find very interesting. "Every time I read to children I tell them the name of the book and the name of the author and the illustrator," she said. "The same way we identify with other adults by asking, 'Did you read Grisham's latest book?' children will begin to identify with their favorite authors."

Paciorek cites a study which looked at children from similarly underprivileged backgrounds, where books typically were not available in the home, and explored why some of those children started school with reading skills while others did not. "What they found as a common denominator among the children who could read was a grandma. Grandmas read to grandchildren," she said. "Grandmas never say, 'Oh, honey, I'm too tired' or 'I'm too busy' like we parents sometimes do."

Many parents have heard the doomsday prediction that if their child isn't reading by a certain age, he or she will be behind for the rest of their lives. "Not true," says Paciorek.

"If you look at the same variance of children learning to walk and talk you realize that parents don't say, 'Oh my gosh, she's 15 months old and she's not walking. I'd better enroll her in a special program or she's never going to walk,' " Paciorek said. "We don't worry much because we know she'll learn to walk. But when it comes to reading, we start to worry that our child will never read. They will learn to read. It just might take some a little longer than others."

One way to get small children interested in reading – and teach them how to follow directions – is to let them help prepare a meal out of a cookbook. "A lot of cookbooks have pictures, so you can have your child tell you what's needed next by looking at the pictures," Paciorek said. "That's reading and it's also teaching them sequencing."

Flash cards, she said, are most valuable if they're homemade with words the individual child identifies with. "Flash cards that really work are the ones that list words that are important to them, so you can make your own that have the child's name, mom and dad's name, brothers and sisters, the names of favorite stuffed animals," she said. "Things that are familiar to them and in their environment are what they'll want to see. Just like when you learn a foreign language, you want to learn words and phrases you'll use."

With her own children, Paciorek uses Post-it Notes a lot to encourage reading and writing. "Post-it notes are terrific because you can stick them anywhere, even on wallpaper, and the children can learn to leave their own notes so they begin to use reading and writing in their daily lives," she said.

Another tip is trying to avoid reading books to your children if you don't like the book. Your lack of enthusiasm will show. "Read books to your children that you like. If you go back to the books you loved as a child, your children will see how excited you are and they'll have more fun," Paciorek said.

Other tips from Paciorek on raising children to be readers include.:

• Take your children to local public library reading hours and tell the librarian what kinds of books you'd like to see the library purchase for children. "They'll let you help them pick the books and many libraries put stickers on children's books to tell you that they've won awards," she said.

• Tape yourself reading to your child so he/she can play it back later and follow along in the book.

• Keep a journal or "family calendar" with your child where you record family activities the child can later read.

• Write lots of notes for your children; put them in backpacks, under pillows, etc., and encourage your children to write notes to you and other family members.

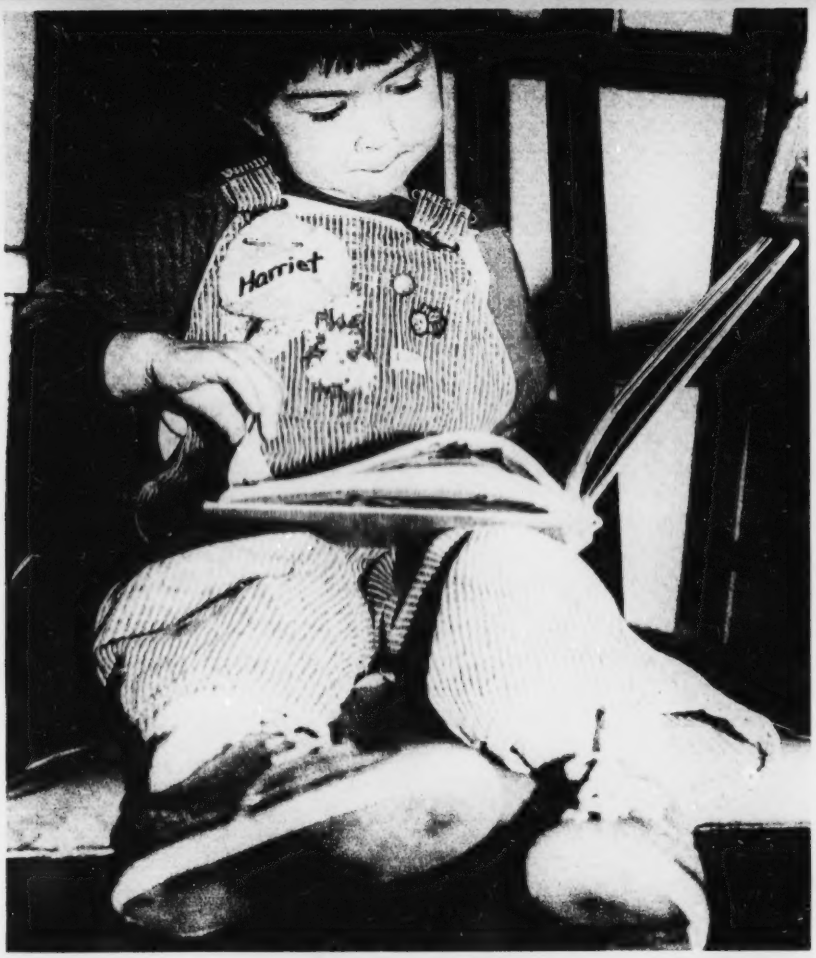
• Have your children dictate a thank you message that you write for gifts. Children love to get mail and will be encouraged to write more if a letter arrives for them.

• Give your child coupons at the grocery store to find the product on the shelf.

• Look for child care programs that use books a lot. "Find one that values reading as much as you do," Paciorek said.

• For small children, help them write their own stories on Post-it Notes to go along with picture books and attach them to the pages.

• Make "Ziploc Baggie" books. Put photographs or pictures cut out of magazines in the plastic bags to create a story, punch a hole through them and tie them with string or yarn. The pictures can be changed whenever the child wants to create new stories.



• Look for personalized books. "The first written word most children will recognize – after McDonald's – is their name. They love to see their names in print," says Paciorek.

• Put name tags on the toys and furniture in children's rooms.

• Take children to children's author book signings, particularly if the author of one of your child's favorite books comes to town.

• Give children bookstore gift certificates for gifts so they get in the habit of shopping for their own books.

• Buy "This book belongs to . . ." stickers so your children can see their names in all their books.

Above all, Paciorek says, relax and remember to have fun with your children while they're learning to read. "Reading isn't a race to see who gets there first. The real measure of a reader is the one who stays with it the longest. We want children to grow into adults who love to read."

A Flair For Fashion

SUE MIKAN

This article first appeared in Offspring *in 1989. The postscript was added by Emily Mikan, now eight years old.*

As usual, we were running late. In fifteen minutes Christopher had to be at kindergarten, and we were trying to gather shoes, jackets, backpacks, and all the other necessary school accessories. I had sent three-year-old Emily upstairs to find shoes and socks a good ten minutes ago and was beginning to

Sue Mikan, a former editor of Offspring, *teaches piano in Pittsburgh, PA, where she lives with her husband David, Christopher, 11, and Emily, 8. Emily is a junior author, having written and illustrated many stories. In 1993, she won state-wide recognition for her essay, "Why I Like My Library."*

get that "Why can't we just once get out the door on time" feeling in the pit of my stomach.

"Emily, we're ready to go now," I yelled up the stairs.

No answer.

"Emily, can you find your shoes?"

No answer.

I went up to her bedroom and found clothes strewn wildly over the floor, bed, and chair. My little girl was stripped down to her underpants, sobbing.

"What's the matter?" I asked, this time more gently.

"I can't decide what to wear!"

The fashion dilemma starts so young. I may have contributed to the situation by encouraging my children to dress themselves before they were out of diapers. Thinking back on it that sounds extreme, but I saw the educational benefits behind the policy at the time. Why, by dressing themselves they were making choices, learning to identify and match

colors, practicing small motor skills, and building their confidence and self-esteem.

All right, I confess there were less noble reasons too. Mainly that by age two both my children were yelling "No!" on a regular enough basis that it was easier to color coordinate all their clothes and say, "Here are your pants, and here are your shirts. Let me know if you need any help." Surprisingly, they rarely needed assistance except for tricky buttons, and they looked pretty good if you didn't mind that sometimes their pants were on backwards. Besides, trying to get dressed kept them amused in the morning while I had my first cup of coffee. But I didn't realize how absorbing this occupation could be until my daughter hit preschool.

With Christopher my challenge during the preschool years had always been to peel the dirty jeans and shirt off his body once a week to get them into the washing machine. He seemed to form an emotional attachment to a piece of clothing and would defend its honor if I suggested wearing something else as a change of pace. Fortunately, he's a clean kid and wears colors that blend with dirt – like brown, gray and faded denim.

One of the wonderful things about having more than one child is that you realize a kid's personality will shine through all your parenting policies and practices. Given the same genetic background, the same home environment, and the same rules and restrictions, each child will handle a situation in a slightly different manner. Take this subject of clothes.

Instead of feeling loyalty to any particular costume, Emily apparently operates on the premise that the more clothes you can put on and take off during a day, the better you're doing. Early on, she learned that certain occasions call for certain fashion statements. Preschool was evidently one of those occasions.

While I wanted her to wear sweats so that she would feel comfortable, she wanted to wear dresses with patent leather shoes.

"Preschool is a good place for tennis shoes," I would say.

"But Tabitha always wears shiny black shoes," Emily would reply.

And she was right. Looking around the preschool room, it seemed that there was an unspoken but clearly understood "cute competition" going on among the girls. Then one day it made sense to me.

The teacher – who I like very much – makes a point of saying something personal and welcoming to every child as they come into school each day. On this particular afternoon Emily was wearing a pink polka-dotted dress with a dropped waistline and a full skirt. We had curled her hair and she was wearing some of her play jewelry.

"My, don't you look beautiful in that dress," I heard the teacher say to Emily. "Just like a movie star. And that necklace! Could I borrow it sometime? It's so pretty."

Emily drank in the praise as eagerly as a kitten laps up warm milk. (So would I if anyone bothered to say things like that to me anymore.) You can imagine that that dress and necklace were favorites for a long time to come.

It was more than preschool, though. At the library, at church, at the grocery store, people made an effort to come over to talk to Emily when she was wearing a pretty dress. When she was wearing blue jeans and an old sweatshirt, the attention would fall off dramatically. Emily responded to this discovery by changing her clothes five or six times a day, fussing with her hair, and, in general refusing to wear anything but a frilly dress.

All this primping was getting on my nerves. I had visions of her growing up into an airhead, gliding through life on her blond curls and sparkly blue eyes. On a more practical level, she wanted to wear summer clothes in the middle of winter, and I wasn't going to let her get frostbite on her knees just to satisfy her sense of style. Clearly, action was needed but I didn't want to completely take away her freedom of choice. So I tried being subtle.

"It's snowing out there, Em. If you don't wear pants your legs will turn into icicles."

"I like my legs to be cold."

Then I tried bribery. I bought her new pink pants with shirts too frilly for my taste. They sat in the drawer.

I even pointed out that Mommy hardly ever wears a dress. She promised to give me some fashion pointers, and dug out *my* shiny black shoes from the back of the closet.

In the end we compromised. Inside, when there's no company, she can wear anything she wants – including her bathing suit. (Yes, this happens) Outside of the house, she has to wear

appropriate clothing: pants for play; a dress to church; and preschool, the library, and the grocery store are all negotiable. Also, she has to help keep her clothes off the floor – clean ones go back in the drawer, dirty ones in the laundry hamper. It's a solution that left everyone's dignity intact and has so far worked.

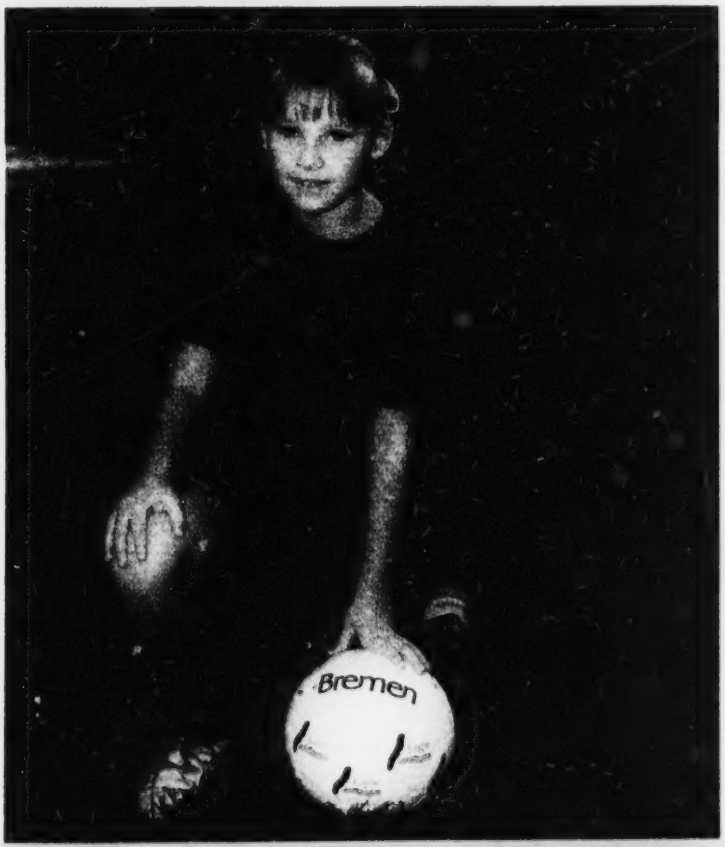
I'm just waiting until she hits puberty and decides to dye her hair green.

Five Years Later . . . An Update from Emily

Now that I am eight, I usually change my clothes only once or twice a day. I don't have as much time as I used to because most of the day I am busy in a third grade classroom. (Sometimes I change my clothes more on a snow day when we don't have school.)

I still like a lot of things that I did when I was younger. For instance, I like jewelry and other accessories, and I still like shiny black shoes. I don't like dresses too much, though, especially not ones that are too cute. I'd rather wear black leggings and a comfortable shirt. In fact, that's what I'm wearing right now. What I really want is pierced ears, but Mom said I have to wait until Middle School.

I wonder what I'll like five years from now when I'm thirteen.



Individual subscriptions to *Offspring* are welcomed: $6.00 for one year, $10.00 for two years; for subscriptions outside the United States, please pay in U.S. funds. Bulk rates are available upon request. Subscription to *Offspring* will be processed upon receipt of check or money order.

TO SUBSCRIBE, send name, address, zip code, and check made out to MCCN/Offspring to 7751 Moreland Rd., Jerome, MI 49249.

TO SUBMIT MANUSCRIPTS OR PHOTOGRAPHS, send them to Offspring Magazine, c/o Mitzi Warren, 7751 Moreland Rd., Jerome, MI 49249. Include your name, address, zip code, and telephone number. Photographs should also contain a statement giving *Offspring* permission to use them from parents of any identifiable children.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

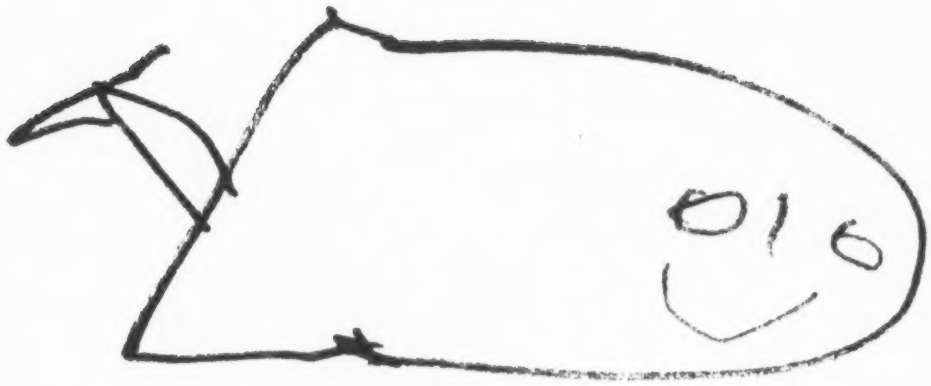
The *Offspring* staff wishes to thank the following people for permission to use their photographs:

Cover:	Lisa Mangigian
page 1:	Amy Ryberg
page 2:	Holy Family Elementary
page 6:	Randy Hockey
page 8:	Karen Chapin, Chippewa Preschool, Midland, MI
page 15:	Amy Hockey
page 21:	Karen Darnell
page 23:	Amy Hockey
page 24:	Northminster Co-op
page 27:	Jane Levy
pages 28, 32:	Sue Mikan
page 29:	Lisa Mangigian

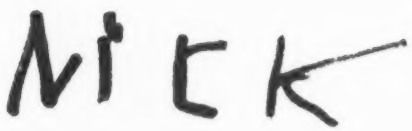
Write to:
Offspring Magazine
7751 Moreland Rd.
Jerome, Michigan 49249

Rates:	1 year	$6.00
	2 years	$10.00

Bulk rates available



NICK



OFFSPRING

1994: No. 2
A Publication of the Michigan Council
of Cooperative Nursery Schools

PS 023313

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Offspring Magazine is published twice yearly. Articles reflect opinions of the authors and not necessarily the editorial board and staff. Manuscripts are accepted for consideration. Subscription of this magazine is through membership in the Michigan Council of Cooperative Nursery Schools or through individual subscriptions. For subscription information, see inside back cover. MCCN does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin.

EDITORIAL BOARD

John Bernardo, M.A., *Detroit Public Schools Psychologist and Psychotherapist*
Carole Grates, *Child Day Care Licensing Consultant*
Anne Cairns Federlein, Ph.D., *Dean of Behavioral and Applied Sciences, State University of New York at Oneota*
Sally L. Fee, M.A., *Birmingham Public Schools, Kindergarten Teacher*
Joseph Fischhoff, M.D., *Child Psychiatrist*
Dan Hodgins, M.A., *Early Childhood Coordinator, Mott Community College*
Donna Howe, M.A., *Michigan State University*
Marjorie M. Kunz, M.A., *MCCN Advisor*
Ginny McCaig, M.A., *University of Michigan-Dearborn*
Marilynn Rosenthal, Ph.D., *Founding Editor*
Jacquelyn Thompson, M.A., *Early Childhood Consultant Michigan Department of Education*
Bernadette Hamilton, President, *MCCN*

EDITORIAL STAFF

Karen Ensminger — Lisa Mangigian
Amy Hockey — Terri Eisenlord

Offspring is written for parents, teacher and others:

- ❑ **To provide a forum for views on dealing with young children;**
- ❑ **To express a variety of ideas;**
- ❑ **To promote the co-op philosophy;**
- ❑ **To enhance our relationships with children and each other.**

Michigan Council of Cooperative Nursery Schools is a member of Parent Cooperative Preschools International.

Copyright © 1994 by the Michigan Council of Cooperative Nursery Schools. All rights reserved. Published in Ann Arbor, Michigan, United States of America.

ISSN: 0472-6340

OFFSPRING

THE MAGAZINE OF THE MICHIGAN
COUNCIL OF COOPERATIVE NURSERY SCHOOLS
Vol. XXXVI No. 2

Co-op My Other Mother	4	*Janice Dulin*
ADD Through the Ages	12	*Kate Cryderman Cole*
Teaching Children To "Listen the First Time"	18	*Christine Marie*
Did You Ever Ask Why?	22	*Phillip D. Caldwell*
Sticks and Stones May Break My Bones But Words Can Hurt Me Too	29	*Carole M. Grates*

Janice Dulin

1940 – 1994

Janice Dulin, M.A., was a co-op parent and teacher. Her life was committed to enhancing young childrens' lives in and out of the classroom. Jan is well known for the many child-centered playgrounds she designed. At the time of her death, she was Instructor and Coordinator of the Nanny Program at Moss Community College in Flint. The article beginning on page 4 is a reprint from the opening address she delivered at the 1990 MCCN Conference.

Our Precious Friend, Janice

Challenges each of us
to stretch – even a little
in our courage,
in our understanding and insight
our efforts to communicate fully,
in our patience,
in our compassion and support of one another
she challenges us
to reach out with encouragement,
to dare to glance from another's point of view
to live fully.

We have been touched by the sunshine
of her vigorous living.
We will never be the same.

She lived . . .
and brought into our world
a great portion
of beauty, love and laughter

And now
her life will ever
be reflected in our hearts!

MMK

Co-op, My Other Mother

JAN DULIN

Co-op has truly been my other mother. Oh, I have a mother. She's alive and well in North Carolina. But when I came to Michigan, which is truly a shock for a North Carolinian, I found that my mother had provided me with some excellent tools to find the nurture that I needed in the cold northland . . . because my mother was a wonderful listener. She listened to everyone. She listened to other adults and moms and teachers. But most of all, she listened to children, and she taught us the joy of listening to children, and she taught us the joy of being listened to as children.

Well, my first co-op job came from the fact that I had developed a friendship with my next door neighbor, Julie, who was five years old. She would come over and sit and talk to me while I cooked and washed dishes and would stay also so I could listen and she could listen to me. One night at Julie's supper table her mother said, "I interviewed for a job today teaching children in a co-op nursery school. What would you think of that?" And Julie said, "Oh, Mama, you're not the right person for that job. Janice needs that job, because Janice is a Mama who doesn't have any children and she needs children."

So I went to interview at the Quoenset Nursery which was the faculty nursery school here on [the MSU] campus. And they asked me, "What would you do if a child had a temper tantrum?" And I drawled, "I don't know. It would depend upon the situation." And they asked, "What would you do if a child wouldn't come to story time?" "I don't know. It would depend upon the situation." Well, they said, "Oh boy, we've got a good one here. We can train her just like we want." And so, I was trained by co-op parents. And let me tell you, they are very special people.

I have a friend to this day who was a co-op parent of mine. I was expecting my first baby, she was expecting her sixth. I thought, I'm going to get some clues from this lady who always seemed relaxed and seemed to enjoy her children so much. So I asked, "Gloria, what's your secret?" She said, "Priorities. Priorities are the key. You do what's important and skip the rest." The next week was Valentine's Day and Gloria brought in a heart shaped decorated cake for me, and 20 cookies all decorated for the children. And she had done this for every child and teacher that her five children in school had. Talk about priorities!

Now Co-op is my other mother. Those who have taught me the most at their knees are the children. Everything, everything I have wanted to know about children I have learned from listening to children. I don't need Piaget to tell me that children construct their own knowledge. Robby taught me that. Robby was painting at the easel one day, and he had red paint and blue paint. And all of a sudden he was calling, "Mrs. Dulin, Mrs. Dulin, look, come here quick. Magic has happened. Purple has come." And oh, the thrill, the thrill of the teachable moment! I went tearing over and explained very carefully what he had just learned. The process, it was wonderful. The next day Robby was at the easel again. He had yellow and blue paint. And he was getting ready to paint. He said, "Mrs. Dulin, I'm going to paint. Watch. Magic's going to happen. Purple's going to come again." Children paint differently than we do. The world is magic.

One windy day Carrie was running away from me across the playground. I kept calling, "Come back, come back, you're

going too far." And she called back, "I can't! I can't! My hair is running away and I have to catch it." Is her hair alive because it's running? Or is it dead because it's – well, children don't know those things and TV doesn't do a thing to help them understand it.

This is another thing that will date me because I was teaching when John Kennedy was killed. And the world stopped and sat in front of the TV for several days. Now my co-op parents are good parents. They watch TV with their children and they help them process that what is shot on TV is only pretend. So when they sat, stricken with grief because J.F. Kennedy was dead, their child consoled, "It's just pretend. It's only on TV. Remember, it's pretend." Mama said, "No, this time it is real. This is really real. We are sad because it is real." And then, what did TV do? Started playing all of John Kennedy's speeches. And their little girl said, "You're wrong, see? He's alive."

One day a friend of mine visited my nursery, played with the children, and then brought a big clown bag out. She sat in the middle of the rug and turned herself slowly into a clown so the children could see the process from a real person to a

clown. Then she played with them as a clown, and offered to paint a clown face on any of them. Joselyn's mother said, "I've always wanted to be a clown. I'll put on a clown face." Sure. As she began to put on the white, Joselyn started screaming, held on to her and said, "Mama, Mama, come back." Even though she had seen the process, her mother disappeared. On that same visit, Eric, when he had his clown face on and saw himself in the mirror said, "Look, look, there's a clown in my mirror." Reality and fantasy blend and blur and in fact, reality and meaning are only found in actual experiences, often repeated over and over again to be convincing.

To dispell the idea that I hang on a hook when I'm not in nursery school, I frequently share stories about my own family with my children at school; and one of the most popular field trips is a trip to my home to slide on my hill and to jump on my bed, and to go in my toilet. And I would always know that I was making some progress towards becoming a real person when I was invited over to play. Or better yet, to spend the night . . . with Eric's assurance that "My daddy will take you home in the morning."

Helping children create a secure and nurturing concept of their world and visiting them in that world empowers them and children love power. I watched Holly one day squatting on the sidewalk looking intently at something and I walked over to see what it was. Ants. Periodically she would reach out and she would (motion) squash one. Ohh, I thought, maybe I should focus her on something a little more constructive, so I started talking about what the ants were doing. "Look how busy they are; they're storing food for winter; they're taking those little milk pods to their babies; look, look what they're

doing." We looked and looked. Then all of a sudden, Holly's eyes lit up and she said, "There's one that's not busy (squish)." Ah yes, power; why do we think they love Superman and Batman, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles? Power!

Moving children toward socially acceptable behavior is probably one of our hardest jobs as teachers and parents. I received a note once that I'll keep forever from a mother who said, "Thank you for making Casey more socially acceptable." I'm not sure what I did. I prefer to think of that process as going from the external control to the internal control.

As children internalize the rules, you pick up clues if you look hard enough. That's called tattle. Then they recall the rule after they have not followed the rule. I looked up one day to see Adam pushing Eric on top of the climber and Eric just barely managing to catch himself before he fell. My first step toward the climber brought these words tumbling out of Adam's mouth, "What I really meant to say was . . . Eric, move out of my way, please." Adam was a particularly frustrating child. He was very articulate but he still chose to bite and scratch and shove his way through life. He's probably responsible for the worst bite I ever witnessed . . . in my thirty years of teaching. Blood was running down the back of Johnny, just running. So I picked up Adam, I picked up Johnny and I carried them out of the room, dropped Adam at the Director's office and went on to the icebox for ice for the bite. When I came back, there sat Adam in a chair and there sat the director in the other chair and she was staring stonily out into space. I thought, "Oh, oh, Adam is being articulate again." The director had delivered one of those wonderful "I" messages. "I'm very upset that you hurt one of your friends in nursery." To which Adam had responded, "I'm obviously talking to someone who doesn't understand. Billy and Bobby are my friends, but Johnny is not my friend."

As we move children toward words and away from physical methods of expressing their dislikes, they're often not capable of finding the right words and the right solutions. They're not bad, they're just inexperienced and they need us to help them explore some other alternatives.

James, my middle son, was outclassed by brothers on both sides verbally. They could just reduce him to tears in no time flat. And of course, the next thing that came was the hit. Well, when you hit your older brother you're not in a lot of trouble, but when you hit your younger brother you're in a passel of trouble, and I thought maybe we needed to help him explore some other solutions. "James, we're going to have to do some other things besides hitting. What else could we do?" "Uhh," he thought, "We could kick him."

Now, James is graduating from college next week and one of his major strengths is problem solving, but it was a long road to get there. And I find that a lot of my stories about children have to do with James. Not that I'm partial. I'm so impartial I don't even get my children's names straight half the time. My oldest says, you know, you're not in trouble if Mom calls your name first because she never gets the right one first. But the other two are a little more bullheaded and did a lot of finding out about things on their own. James made me learn with him.

One of the things he tried to teach me was the value of consistency, that dreadful thing that we all hate to hear as parents. Now, I'm pretty laid back but at supper time there was one rule. You had to be clean when you came to the table for the rest of us to digest our food. But day after day after day after day he came to the table without washing his face and arms, and day after day after day after day he was sent away to do so. One night in frustration I said, "Why, why don't you just do it so I don't have to send you away every day?" He looked up at me and said, "One day you forgot." Living for the day I'd forget again. What a wonderful struggle we engage in with our children, that tenderness, that love-hate relationship where we help them to become separate from us and independent, and yet balance that with our need for the oneness with them and their need for us.

When James was four, Dan was born. And all my friends came and they brought gifts. A baby was a little unusual at that time in your thirties – now it's not. It was then, so Dan made a big splash. Lots of traffic, a lot of talking about whether he was nursing well and his bowel movements were

. . . you know how they were, what you do with babies. Talk, talk, talk, talk and more talk about babies. One day the doorbell rang and I went to the door and there stood James, training pants, high heeled shoes, and a shoulder bag. "Good morning," he said, "I've come to see your beautiful baby." "Come right in." We went through the house, found the bassinet and there slept Dan. "Why, yes, he is a beautiful baby, but now, tell me about that darlin' wonderful boy, James." So we did. We went into the living room and I even made up a few stories.

Finding a way to be special is critical for all of us no matter what age we are. A little boy in my nursery had spinal cord disease and I always worried about his falling. And I would hover when he climbed on the climber. Another little girl said to me one day as I was watching so carefully, "Mrs. Dulin, is he your boy?" We all need to feel like we're special. We're somebody's girl or boy.

And I guess for me in my adulthood, co-op has done that for me. I see co-op as a triangle with the child, the teacher and the parent in the corners. And I see within me a parent and a teacher and a child. And it is at those points that I feel best able to integrate with co-op, to reach out and touch. When a child becomes a teacher and the parent becomes the child, and the teacher becomes the nurturer, then our worlds always stop and intertwine. What a wonderful community, the community of the co-op family. I've been able to find the support and nurture that I've needed to develop a new parent outlook – not that the one that I had was so bad, but this new one enhances and reinforces children and adults. They are respected, they are listened to, they are cared about. There are people on their side who love them. I hope that as you go through your adulthood you find that same kind of support in your co-op nursery community.

ADD Through the Ages

KATE CRYDERMAN COLE

Kate Cryderman Cole has a M.A. in Early Childhood. She is currently President of the Teachers Association of G.D.C.N.C. and has been teaching at the Troy (Michigan) Co-op Preschool for nine years.

It's been the topic on "Oprah", "Company", "Donahue" and nearly all of the news magazine shows. Magazines of every type contain articles on the subject. Open your local newspaper and chances are you will find a support group. The subject is Attention Deficit Disorder, better known as ADD or ADHD, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

Hyperactivity, distractibility and impulsivity were initially called *Hyperkinetic Disorder of Childhood.* By 1980, the name had been changed to *Attention Deficit Disorder* to emphasize that difficulty with attention was the major issue, not hyperactivity. In 1987, the name was changed again to reflect the reality that all of the problems were significant. The newest term is *Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.*

People may believe that this disorder suddenly appeared in the 80's. In reality many of the high energy adults you know today may have had ADD as a child and never knew it. I was one of them.

ADHD and Learning Disabilities (LD) are two separate problems; however, they occur together so frequently that it is useful to consider them related. Between 10 and 20 percent of all school-aged children have LD. Of those, 20 to 25 percent will also have ADHD.

ADHD is characterized by three types of behavior. These are hyperactive, distractible, and/or impulsive. Only one behavior is necessary to be diagnosed as ADHD. Health professionals need to determine if the behavior is caused by a situation and may go away when the situation changes or if the behaviors are chronic and pervasive. Chronic means behaviors that have been there throughout the child's life, and pervasive means that the behaviors are present throughout the child's day. If the behavior is both chronic and pervasive, clinical evidence supports that it is neurologically based, or ADHD. Treatment for ADHD will not correct any learning disabilities; they must be treated separately.

LD can occur in any of the four steps of learning. The first step is the process of recording information in the brain (input). The second is understanding and organizing the information (integration). Third, the information must be stored, to be retrieved later (memory). Finally, information

must be communicated from the brain to people or translated into action in the environment (output). Parents need to understand their child's strengths and weaknesses. Building on a child's strengths rather than becoming frustrated with weaknesses will create the optimal situation for all.

When trying to determine if a problem is ADHD or LD it is best done by a team of professionals. ADHD is identified primarily through evaluating a child's history and from observations made by parents, teachers and others. LD is diagnosed by comparing a child's intellectual ability and potential with his or her current level of achievement. Ideally, the full team should meet to discuss what they've found and to establish a diagnosis and treatment plan. It is more likely that one person of the team will meet with you about learning disabilities and your doctor will meet with you to discuss ADHD.

ADHD and LD are disabilities that impact on all aspects of life. For most children with LD, the disabilities will last a life time, whereas up to 50 percent of ADHD children will be so afflicted. A parent's role is extremely important. You must be an advocate for your child seeking out the help your child needs. No one is better equipped or more motivated than a caring parent.

"She day dreams." "She is the class clown." "Her desk is a mess." "It's hard to get her to settle down and do her work." These are things my parents heard regularly about me as a child. Back then there was no diagnosis for children with these symptoms and, perhaps, that was to my advantage. My teachers knew that the best place for me was right in front so with a wink, or nod, or stern look work was finished. When I was given a special job or responsibility, it was no longer necessary to be the class clown.

My mother gave me the best gift of all; she taught me to make lists. People who know me believe that I am the most organized person and it's because I make lists for everything. Without them there would be chaos.

It was no surprise when my son was diagnosed as ADD. When I told our new family doctor that our son was ADD, he replied that some of the most brilliant people have ADD and that he too was diagnosed with ADD! There is a lot to admire

in our doctor; he has endless energy, his mind changes gears with lightning speed, and, of course, he has tremendous confidence.

My son took medication for several years. It helped him to maintain concentration in class and get his work done. However, there were several negative factors with medication. His appetite was very small so he grew slowly during the school year. After school there were many days when he would "crash" and become very emotional. The worst was that other students knew he was taking medication and would sometimes tease him. All in all, the benefits outweighed the side effects.

Over the years Kevin and I developed several strategies. The kitchen timer was set for everything from homework to cleaning up his toys. Homework was divided into half-hour segments with half-hour breaks in between. Home has always been a safe place; he can complain about school and teachers and the unfairness of life in general. Together we found ways he could organize everything from his room to schoolwork.

Many of the traits of ADD are a trial in the very young but an asset in adults. Perseveration means repeated activity or action. A young child will perseverate by pulling the velcro tabs on shoes, kicking the seat in front of him, singing the same song. Consider that the root word of perseveration is *persevere.* As a parent or teacher it may be necessary to channel this random energy into a more appropriate activity. Pounding nails with a hammer, sorting or classification activities, water or sand play, and small travel games are good alternatives. My son has become adept at stop-action animation and received a scholarship to an animation workshop. Animation involves making minute changes in the character, shooting one frame at a time with the camera, and repeating the process. It is perseveration in the positive sense.

Children with ADD usually have poor handwriting. Copying material from a chalkboard or taking notes is extremely difficult. They need to concentrate on the written or spoken word and then remember how to form the letters. Often their minds are running faster than they are able to write. The computer is a fabulous alternative to writing.

Kevin started writing stories and reports on the computer in second grade. His teacher objected at first, but when reminded that one of the goals of the district is computer literacy, she encouraged him. It is important to know if the goal of the assignment is practicing handwriting or the ability to write stories and organize research for reports. Computers provide immediate positive reinforcement when used for spelling or math drill games. They never get impatient or rude and they are fun. Many ADD children become highly skilled using computers.

As they reach adolescence about 40% of these children display significant improvement, either as a result of maturation or developing coping skills. My son is one of the lucky ones. He is no longer on medication. At age 15, Kevin works as a camera man for the local cable company, creates animations for a show he is producing, takes driver education classes, mows the lawn and has fun with friends. When he was four or five, I wondered if he would ever fit in.

A diagnosis of ADD is not the end of the world. So many programs, articles and even support groups spend an inordinate amount of time describing the negative possibilities. Every problem brings an opportunity for change. As parents and teachers of children with ADD, it is important to focus on what is positive about any child, use past success to build on, and never give up.

For Further Reading about ADHD

Fowler, Mary Cahill, *Maybe You Know My Kid, A Parents' Guide to Understanding and Helping Your Child with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder;* Birch Lane Press, 1992.

Contadino, Darlene and Ramundo, Peggy, *Understanding and Managing Attention Deficit Disorder in the Classroom,* Prepared for the Attention Deficit Disorder Council of Greater Cincinnati. 5715 Thomaridge, Cincinnati, OH, 45248. $5 and $1 postage and handling.

University of Minnesota, *A.D.H.D. A Guide to Understanding and Helping Children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity in School Settings.*

Silver, Dr. Larry B. *ADHD Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder and Learning Disabilities.* Booklet for Parents. Also, the *Misunderstood Child. A Guide for Parents of Learning Disabled Children.* New York, McGraw-Hill, 1984.

Teaching Children To "Listen The First Time"

CHRISTINE MARIE

I can't believe I was so naive. All my pre-baby years I had sugarplum dreams about my future life as a supermom. I envisioned taking my children by the hand, walking together over my Mop-and-Glo kitchen floor to the table where we would

Christine Marie is the mother of four children, one of whom has ADHD. She has a B.S. in psychology, has taught preschool and kindergarten, has published over 20 books, and was the 1992 Virginia Mother of Young Children. She currently writes a monthly newsletter and is the president and founder of the Applebrook Family Enrichment Network in Fremont, MI.

harmoniously bake chocolate chip cookies together. I pictured being an angel-natured mom who would say, "It's time to put the toys away," just to have my children tilt their heads, smile and say, "Sure, Mom!"

Silly me. I never knew that chocolate chips could be used as weapons. I never expected my children to fight, back talk, disobey, or embarass me in public, but now I know it's all a part of family life. And after four children and years of practice, I finally know what to do about it.

First, explain to your children what it means to "listen the first time." Then give your children a practice test to see if they understand it. Like this:

"Go sit on the couch. Good. Straighten the rug. Put the book away. Great job!"

Now explain that you are going to notice when the children listen and obey the first time – and then put a sticker on the chart. When the chart has seven stickers, celebrate the good feelings together! Make sure the children know how many stickers are required, and what the celebration will be beforehand, and make it something that involves all siblings.

Think of a celebration that will motivate the children. Here are a few ideas:

- Have a picnic under the kitchen table
- Have a family pajama party
- Go on a trip to town with grandma
- Eat popsicles in the bathtub
- Enlist mom or dad as personal servant for 30 minutes
- Ride Daddy as a bucking bronco
- Take a bubblebath at midnight
- Choose the menu for the family dinner

Let your imagination go wild! Positive, novel family experiences can stir up your child's motivation. And they don't have to cost a cent!

So what do you do when the child doesn't listen? Apply a consequence. IMMEDIATELY! Ten words or less. The more you repeat your words or reason with your child or verbalize your frustration before you apply a consequence, the less cooperative and more sassy-mouth your child may become. Oftentimes children misbehave to get a reaction from you. The more verbage you spray on the misbehavior, the more likely it will grow!

In the heat of the moment, words don't help – consequences do. There are different kinds of consequences you can use. Time-out is the Biggie. Time-out is the most used discipline method in America, but guess what? It won't work for every child in every situation. I tried time-outs on my son (who is a day-dreaming, doesn't-like-to-move-a-lot child), and then I realized that he *enjoyed* being in time-out.

This is when I started getting creative.

For the child who . . .	**Consider this consequence**
Likes to sit around	Running laps
Likes to talk	Put speaking privileges in time-out a few minutes
Likes to ride bike	Prohibiting bike-riding for a few days
Likes to talk on phone	No phone privileges
Dislikes going to bed	Send to bed early

For this misbehavior . . .	Consider this consequence
Leaving toys out	Put toys in TOY PRISON for a week
Won't stay in bed	Can't sleep with favorite blankie
Spitting	Spit in toilet 25 times
Leaving clothes on floor	Vacuum all bedroom floors
Backtalk	Non-talking time-out, 1 minute per year of age

An effective consequence is one that makes the child uncomfortable. You do not need to yell at, strike, shame, or belittle your child in the process – simply apply the consequence in 10 words or less. If you need to talk about the misbehavior, talk about it later on.

In spite of these creative consequence ideas, it's much more effective to notice what a child does right. Express your pleasure verbally and non-verbally – with smiles, hugs, gestures. *Notice* when your child does something with a good attitude. *Notice* when your little boy hangs up his coat or *doesn't* leave droplets on the toilet seat. Children are inclined to repeat that which gets noticed most.

Here's an example. Once there was a study of a kindergarten teacher with a serious problem: her students were out of their seats an excessive amount of time. A researcher came in to her class and recorded the number of minutes the students were out of their seats and the number of times she yelled at the children. He then asked her to stop *yelling* at the children to get back in their seats, and start *noticing* the children only when they were sitting in their seats. It worked! Her in-seat behavior increased tremendously.

Try it. Go on a "listen-the-first-time hunt." When you do this, the child will start thinking, "I'm a good listener. I'm an obedient child. I feel good about this." And this will help your child develop the patterns of success.

There are no guarantees, but these ideas sure work for me. I may not be supermom, but at least we can finally make chocolate chip cookies together happily. And hopefully, it'll be happily ever after.

Did You Ever Ask

PHILLIP D. CALDWELL

People often ask me why, more than 20 years ago, I decided to be a firefighter, to put forth the effort it takes to be good at my job. I still remember the day.

It was a cold winter day. We had responded to 14 emergencies the night before. I was beyond tired. As I sat looking out my window watching the snow falling lightly, he came walking down the street.

He looked like a walking junk heap. On his coat was pinned a note. Under his right arm was a bag with his shoes; under his left was a raincoat from the day before yesterday. On his feet were unbuckled boots. His nose was running, and his pockets were full of crumpled up papers with flowers or smiling faces stamped on them.

Captain Caldwell is a firefighter in Ypsilanti Township, Michigan, where he is in charge of the Juvenile Fire Setter program and the Public Fire Education division. Capt. Caldwell also works at the National Institute for Burn Medicine in Ann Arbor, which is dedicated to reducing burn injuries, and fires. Recently, with the support of the Skillman Foundation in Detroit, the Washtenaw and Livingston County United Way and the Michigan FIREFIGHTERS, the Burn Institute has been able to develop a prevention program for preschool children called "Fire is a Tool." For information on setting up a fire prevention program in a preschool, call (313) 769-9000.

He stopped at every snowdrift and clumped up and down in it. He walked through every patch of slush. He got his gloves all wet making snowballs, forgot his shoes and raincoat he had dropped, then found an immensely interesting broken tree to climb. Suddenly he remembered today was the day he was supposed to come right home from school.

He ran the rest of the way home, dragging his raincoat, losing one shoe and having to go back for it; he slipped as he turned into the driveway, getting his knees wet; he wiped his nose on the back of his glove; kicked the back door open to announce his arrival.

And when the door opened, he yelled, "I'm home. Am I late?" He jumped in my lap, hugged me real tight and asked, "You have any fires last night, Dad?"

I knew at this moment I would train myself to become the best firefighter I could be, and train and encourage others to do the same.

Much of my time now is spent in dealing with juvenile fire starters. The following is a true story:

The gloom of another lonely night smothered the small bedroom like a cold, moist blanket. Occasionally, light from a passing car would penetrate the darkness, and for a moment, the bare walls would spring to life with grotesque and ghastly shadows. Then they would plunge into an even deeper darkness than before. The room was still and cloaked in heavy silence.

Usually the small girl sitting like a statue beside the window would have been hiding from her imagination under a pile of blankets on her bed. But not tonight. There was something more important taking place that held her attention, something even more frightening than the ghoulish fantasies of a child afraid of the dark. Staring blindly into the raindrops hitting the window, she sat absorbed in the nightmare that was taking place in another part of the house.

All evening, her mother and father had been fighting. It began at the supper table just as the family sat down to eat, slowly at first – accusing questions and vivid replies. The kids

knew it was coming. They would feel the tension mounting between their parents. Then, in a sudden spurt of their parents' anger, they were sent to their bedrooms, and the battle exploded into a full-fledged war. Like opposing armies, the parents pummeled each other with barrage after barrage of angry and hate-filled words.

The air rang with the bitterness of their voices. Five-year-old "Angel" heard every word but understood nothing. It was the uncontrolled rage behind the words that frightened her so much. She had no idea what might have happened to cause her parents to be so angry. She only knew they were going to hurt each other.

She was torn between the desire to defend her parents from each other and the urge to do something drastic to stop them. She thought for only a moment before reaching for the discarded matches she had found in the restaurant parking lot. Without hesitating, she opened her bedroom door and set the linen closet on fire. Then she walked calmly back to her bed and tucked herself in. In her mind, the fire would soon be discovered and her parents would cease to fight. She would have solved her parents' problems.

Angel's room is still cloaked in heavy silence. But now, there is an opening in the ceiling near where we are standing. Rafters and laths are smoke-blackened and charred. Tiny droplets of rain trickle in like uninvited guests.

Around us the water is flowing from a pair of fire hoses. The water has made a black, soupy lake by the front door. Firefighters are trudging through it, the ooze splashing past their black boots. As the water cascades down the porch steps, it is full of debris: hairbrushes, pieces of curtains, clothing, and chunks of woodwork.

Outside there is the noise of the pumpers, the hissing of sprayed water, and the shouted command of the captain over the crackle of an angry, frantic radio.

But it is quiet in Angel's room. There are five of us, all firefighters. We are strong, tough men, maybe a bit callous at first appearance. But actually, we are all gentle, caring men caught up in a violent occupation.

Our tired, red-rimmed eyes go from one blackened face to another, then to the soot-enhanced outline of a little girl lying on her hed. We have done everything just the way we have been taught. Ninety-two years of experience collectively, but this time we were too late. We all feel we have failed.

We attacked the fire frantically, and we made a beautiful stop. But there on the bed is the tiny outline that we had not counted on. We were just too late.

I often tell this true story to other firefighters while trying to enlist them as juvenile firesetter counselors. Often I am told that the job is too emotional, too involved, and they don't want to let their emotions show.

Well, we all know that there is no such thing as an unemotional person.

Each of us is emotional. Each of us has feelings, one way or another, every conscious moment of our lives. Lack of expressiveness doesn't mean lack of emotions; most of us spend our lives in pursuit of the enjoyable emotion seeking after three intangibles – happiness, love, and peace.

I think Angel was trying to find at least one of these before setting the fire. When children cannot find love, peace, or happiness in family situations over a long period, problems begin to develop. When this happens, children often show low tolerance for frustration and are prone to intense, aggressive outbursts.

To most children, a firefighter is a hero, racing confidently to a raging fire, quelling the intense flames, making a daring and dramatic rescue. Firefighters can use that hero image to help the Angel of their community.

In Ypsilanti Township, Michigan, for example, nine firefighters have trained in juvenile firesetter counseling by taking courses at the National Fire Academy or Eastern Michigan University, or both. Although there are two people who do most of the counseling, the others provide an important supplement.

During the past three years, we've counseled 200 children. The process involves three questionnaires filled out separately by the parents and children to provide information about

family environment and give us a chance to establish a rapport with the kids. Certain "flags" among the answers – such as indications of sexual abuse, beatings, and frequent, recent firesetting – let us know a case needs to be referred to a mental health professional. In less severe situations, we offer an average of four to six hours of education and counseling aimed at making changes that will end the firesetting.

One such case involved a mother whose husband had abused both her and her older children. When she was at work early on Saturday mornings, one of the older children, who objected to having cartoons on television, was beating the younger kids. They, in turn, were setting fires out of anger. The woman then followed through on our suggestion to get an outside babysitter, and the firesetting stopped.

After counseling a child whom arson investigators have identified as a firesetter, we recommend to the juvenile prosecutor that the case be kept out of court. Some of our cases, however, come to us at the prosecutor's request. They usually involve plea bargaining that sets up counseling and, sometimes, community service as the disposition of the case.

None of the kids we've counseled has become a repeat firesetter. Our success demonstrates how firefighting heroes with flashing lights and wailing sirens can also become a child's quiet hero.

Did You Know?

–Burns and fires are the leading cause of accidental death in the home for children under age 14.

–80% of the burn accidents and 50% of the fire accidents each year could easily be prevented.

–Children from birth through age four are the largest group suffering burn accidents.

–70% are scalding accidents caused by hot water or hot liquids. These occur mostly in the kitchen during meal time or by children pulling scalding liquids onto themselves.

–Another 20% occur in the bathtub. Hot water that is 120 degrees takes only five minutes to cause a burn; at 150 degrees it only takes a few seconds. (Most hot water heaters are set at 150 degrees when they leave the factory.)

–Children ages 5 through 14 are burned primarily by flames – mostly through playing with matches and lighters. About 20% of the injuries are scalding accidents.

You Can Promote Safety By Doing These Simple Tasks:

1. Install and maintain smoke detectors.
2. Develop and practice a fire exit plan.
3. Set hot water heaters at 120 degrees fahrenheit.
4. Cook on back stove burners only.
5. Teach children that fire is a tool, not a play thing.
6. Supervise children in the kitchen.

This information came from the National Institute for Burn Medicine. For further information, call 313-769-9000.

IF A BURN ACCIDENT HAPPENS . . .

1. STOP THE BURNING PROCESS.

Put out the fire the fastest way you can. Time is critical. Drop and roll, wrap in a blanket, cover with water. Pull off burned clothes. Do not run.

If the burning clothing is gasoline soaked, it will have to be completely removed to be extinguished.

If a chemical or scald burn occurs, FLOOD with cool water and remove clothing.

2. CALM THE INDIVIDUAL.

If a large area is burned, wrap it in a clean sheet or towel and go immediately to the nearest hospital Emergency Department.

Talk to the victim; explain what you are doing.

3. CLEANSE BURNED AREA WITH COOL WATER AND MILD SOAP.

If a small area is burned, wash it with cool water and soap and rinse thoroughly. Do not use ice. Apply a bland ointment. Cover with a sterile gauze bandage.

HOME CARE:

Cleanse once or twice a day with soap and water; rinse thoroughly and dry. Cover with a thin layer of bland ointment.

Watch for signs of inflammation: redness, pain, heat, swelling. If these do occur, see your doctor, or go to the nearest hospital Emergency Department.

If hair is in or near the wound it can be shaved using a clean razor and shaving cream and rinsed thoroughly.

Do not break blisters. They provide a sterile cover over the wound. When the blisters break naturally, remove the loose skin with clean scissors. Cut 1/2 inch from the edges.

4. CALL YOUR DOCTOR IF YOU NEED HELP.

If you have any doubt about what to do, call your family physician or the nearest hospital Emergency Department and ask for advice.

STICKS AND STONES MAY BREAK MY BONES BUT WORDS CAN HURT ME TOO

CAROLE M. GRATES

"Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me." I remember playing as a child and feeling hurt when someone called me a name, but invoking this little phrase could usually ease the pain. Now that I am an adult I know so well that words can hurt as much as sticks and stones. And, in truth, although the damage is not always visible like physical abuse, verbal abuse can have a devastating effect on children and the adults they become.

Carole M. Grates is the area manager in the Division of Child Day Care Licensing, Michigan Department of Social Services. Carole presented this topic at the Michigan Council of Cooperative Nursery Schools Conference, April 1994.

As a teacher I was often dismayed by the words parents would sometimes use with their children. As a consultant I was often equally dismayed by the words that teachers would sometimes use with their students. The saddest part is that many times it was meant to be in the best interest of the child, and the adult involved did not even hear the tone or the message conveyed. As significant adults in the lives of children, we need to sensitize ourselves to our words and our tone of voice and the messages they are giving.

How often have you heard, "How could you do such a dumb thing?" Most people, children included, do not set themselves up to do "something dumb." It is usually the result of insufficient information or lack of ability that causes a person to do "something dumb." And if it is really dumb, a reminder of the stupidity is rarely needed – the child already knows. What she needs to know is how to clean it up and how to avoid doing it again. Sometimes adults may have actually set the stage for failure in these situations by filling the paint jars too full or pouring milk in a glass that is too hard for small hands to manage.

Empty threats are another way adults try to control children's behavior. One Sunday as I sat in the "crying room" of church, I heard a father reprimand his child for crying by threatening to put her in a closet when they got home if she didn't stop. Of course he got his way, but how confusing and

frightening to the child! First, we can hope he would not really do this, and if not then it is an empty threat and the child soon learns to ignore it. If, in fact, he would follow through, how frightening for the child as a threat and as a fact of her life. This can lead to nightmares or unreasonable fear of closed places. Many parents threaten their children with the bogeyman and then wonder why they are afraid of the dark. I also heard a day care provider threaten a child, "If you don't take a nap, you won't be able to go home." One, it is an empty threat because I am reasonably sure she was not going to stay at the center with the child all night. And two, how devastating to threaten children with the loss of the most secure place they all know – their home base.

Our choice of words can also write a life script for a child if they are used often enough. Significant adults are a mirror in which the child sees the image he is reflecting to the world. When the mirror reflects only the negative side, that is the image he will develop.

When a child does something "wrong," you may hear an adult say, "You are stupid–bad–lazy–will never amount to anything" and on and on. If a child hears this enough, he begins to believe it about himself.

Adults also try to control children by threatening the loss of their love. Have you every heard a parent say, "Get out of my sight, I can't stand to look at you," in response to misbehavior? Love needs be unconditional. If it is not so in the early years, children will have a difficult time developing trust. This does not mean that adults have to accept everything a child does. It does mean that we describe the action, not the child, as unacceptable. A subtle change of wording can accomplish this.

Changing your approach can help change your words. The next time you are ready to spew out a few negative words or phrases in a situation, try the following:

STOP
Slow down and take time to think about your choice of words before they come out. Is there a positive way to correct that you can use in place of the negative? Using "I" messages can help here instead of saying, "You are so bad," try saying, "I feel really angry about what happened." This acknowledges the truth of the matter in an honest way without attacking the child.

LOOK
Yes, look at what you are expecting from the child. Often we are expecting more than he can deliver. We know that young children cannot sit still for more than a few minutes. Why then do we expect that they will be able to make it through a church service for an hour without some misbehavior? If your review of your expectations reveals that you have asked something that cannot be delivered, your response to the misbehavior will be different. It still may need correcting, but your choice of words will be different.

LISTEN
Listen to your inner voice. What is the tone? Listen to your choice of words. Are they descriptive of your anger, your feelings, your concerns or do they belittle or shame the child as a person?

ACT
By now, hopefully, you are in control. Describe your feelings – anger, concern, dismay – just be honest. Describe what made you angry. Then give the child constructive criticism. Write a script for her. Give her some skills so she will know how to act the next time the situation arises.

Does it take longer? Yes. But the child gains new life skills and also sees a reflection of herself as a competent human being in your adult mirror. Be sure that your words can never hurt a child.

Individual subscriptions to *Offspring* are welcomed: $6.00 for one year, $10.00 for two years; for subscriptions outside the United States, please pay in U.S. funds. Bulk rates are available upon request. Subscription to *Offspring* will be processed upon receipt of check or money order.

TO SUBSCRIBE, send name, address, zip code, and check made out to MCCN/Offspring to 4610 Gregory Rd., Dexter, MI 48130.

TO SUBMIT MANUSCRIPTS OR PHOTOGRAPHS, send them to Offspring Magazine, c/o Terri Eisenlord, 4610 Gregory Rd., Dexter, MI 48130. Include your name, address, zip code, and telephone number. Photographs should also contain a statement giving *Offspring* permission to use them from parents of any identifiable children.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The *Offspring* staff wishes to thank the following people for permisison to use their photographs:

Cover: Amy Hockey
page 1: Kathleen Lewis
page 6: Karen Ensminger
page 7: Phyllis Wordhouse
page 10: Phyllis Wordhouse
page 11: Al Erickson
page 16: Nancy Hummel
page 19: Maureen Girty
page 26: Phillip Caldwell
page 30: Nancy Hummel

Write to:
Offspring Magazine
4610 Gregory Road
Dexter, Michigan 48130

Rates: 1 year $6.00
2 years $10.00
Bulk rates available

Me HOLDING a cat
Isabella's